



Author

Title

Class

PS3531

Imprint

Book

A8318P3

1921

PAN IN AMBUSH

A Play in One Act

By MARJORIE PATTERSON



VAGABOND PLAYS—No. 3

PAN IN AMBUSH

A Play in One Act

BY

MARJORIE PATTERSON

11



The Norman, Remington Company

Baltimore

1921

PS 3531
A 8318 P3
1921

Manuscript registered in Copyright office April 15th, 1920

COPYRIGHTED FEBRUARY, 1921,
BY THE NORMAN, REMINGTON CO.



JUL -9 1921

10

Published by special arrangement with Mr. Norman Lee Swartout
The Professional and Amateur Stage rights on this play are strictly reserved.
Application for permission to produce it should be made to Mr. Norman Lee
Swartout, Summit, N. J.

©CLD 57905

201

First produced in the United States at the Vagabond Theatre, Thursday evening, March 7th, 1918.

THE FAUN.....Adele Gutman Nathan
THE POET.....Charles Ernest Wallace
THE SCHOOLMISTRESS.....Florence Stieff
THE BOTANY TEACHER.....Clapham Murray, Jr.
FIRST PUPIL.....Louise Talbot
SECOND PUPIL.....Therese Strother
THIRD PUPIL.....Cecelia Harvey Coale

SCENE

A lovely old garden run wild L. A sundial and a bench where the Poet is discovered trying to read. Books are scattered around him. R. A young Faun either in the fork of a tree or in the shadow of a bush is mending his pipes. The house is an old manor house at back. Door R. In backcloth. One feels the influence of noon. The garden is suffused with sun and seems to steam with the scent of lilacs and heliotrope. R. A Bower.

CHARACTERS

A POET

A SCHOOLMISTRESS

A BOTANY TEACHER

FIRST PUPIL.....VICTORIA

SECOND PUPIL.....CAROLINE

THIRD PUPIL.....GERTRUDE

A FAUN (Supposed to be invisible to
other characters).

Period of the play: A day that is past.

Time: High noon.

Place: An old-fashioned garden somewhere in England where the roses bloom early.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTERS

THE POET—A man of imagination, aspirations and appetites. Black velvet coat, lavender trousers strapped under the instep. Pretentiously disordered hair; general resemblance to ALFRED DE MUSSET.

THE SCHOOLMISTRESS—Typical old maid. She wears a flowered crinoline, a cashmere shawl; a pork pie hat and mittens and carries a butterfly net.

THE BOTANY TEACHER—A character resembling the comic curate in Gilbert's "BAB BALLADS," clad in sepulchral black, a broad-brimmed hat and black gloves several sizes too large; a magnifying glass and a box containing floral specimens, make up his equipment.

THE FIRST PUPIL—A young girl just realizing the promise and wonder of life.

THE SECOND PUPIL Two preternaturally ingenue

THE THIRD PUPIL girls in their early teens.

THE THREE SCHOOL-GIRLS are dressed in white muslin crinolines. They wear poke bonnets, pantalettes, white stockings and black sandal shoes. THE FIRST PUPIL has a pale blue belt and a pale blue parasol. THE SECOND PUPIL a pink belt and pink parasol. THE THIRD PUPIL a violet belt and violet parasol.

THE FAUN—A healthy young animal.

(Invisible and inaudible to other characters.)

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET

Books, magic books, divine consolers,
Enchanted pages that while away
Half my anguish, half my longing.
Help, potent books, throughout this livelong day!

FAUN

Oh swallow, swallow, swift-winged swallow!
Far-travelled swallow that cleaves the spray!
Love and laughter and golden sunshine
And long, long dreams: these bring in the May!
I'll mend my pipe, I'll play and the valley—
All the valley shall ring again!
Frogs shall sing—and the gnats—in chorus,
And two-legged animals, called men.
With fang, horn, hoof I'll sport by the river,
Pipe up echoes over the hill!

POET

Sick, sick heart, why do you tremble?
Obstinate heart, grow cold and still!
Cease to beat—you must forget her!

FAUN

I'll dance the echoes up over the hill,
I'll hide in reeds, when nymphs go bathing,
Dangle my hoofs in the clear, cool rill.
Oh, for a field deep, deep with clover
To roll in the sun—worry a leaf!

POET

Spring has come with sun and the swallow
With Love's own langour and Love's own grief!
(A pause, he tries to read)

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET—(*Cont'd*)

This little book, that weighs so lightly in my hand,
Is full of wisdom. From its dog-leafed page I understand

A woman's heart is nothing—a mere feather
Dependent on the seasons and the weather!
The South wind blows! She loves you—she's blown
hither!

The North wind blows! She's gone—lost to you and
blown thither!

So, under Nature's wild, indomitable sway,
She's sometimes out of reach—and sometimes flung
your way!

FAUN

(*Still working at his pipes*)

Rill pipe!

Shrill pipe!

Sacred fife of May,

Win me a fair mate,

A new one every day!

Mermaid!

Fur maid!

Any maid I'll woo.

Rill pipe!

Shrill pipe!

Win me someone, do!

POET

The hoary student—he who did this work compile—
Calls woman fickle, merciless, omnipotent and vile
Short-legged beast! Base elemental power!
Could I but clasp thy hand, great Schopenhauer!
Her voice that lies so well—her sweet voice chaste
sage,

PAN IN AMBUSH

Foments within my breast fierce unmitigated rage.
Transports me! Holy rage! Master, perhaps you too
Broke from some early love, heartbroken as I do.

FAUN

Rill pipe!
Shrill pipe!
Now that winter's through
Win me a fair mate
Any mate will do.
Soft-eyed
Sylphide!
By the water-fall
Naiad!
Dryad!
Change is best of all!

POET

But here I do forswear her. Yes, thus here and now
To God's own Firmament, His azure Dome, I make
this vow!
The old love I'll uproot, I'll weed it from my heart
And live a woman-hater—austere, apart!
Through the grass her crinoline shall come no more
Be-ribboned, fluttering bell of joy, towards my door;
And—when we meet—in her face soberly I'll trace
The skull! Death's grinning jaws, his stereotyped
grimace!

FAUN

Rill pipe!
Shrill pipe!
Win me someone, do!
Get me a fair mate
A stranger—someone new!

PAN IN AMBUSH

Strange kiss!
New Bliss!
Put her to the test
Surmise!
Surprise!
New love is best!

POET

(Picks up several of the books and studies them)
I have the poets here, fond Virgil and easy-going
Horace,
And Ovid who did love so often.
(Throws the books from him)
No, I'll not read them, for their dancing rhythm
Reminds me of her footfall:
And their cadence of her soft lingering voice
When she did love me!

FAUN

It might be wise to ask the gouty Satyr,
He, whom the nymphs adore,
It might be well to ask that obscene monster
What pretty tune he plays when Spring comes in
That wins him a new love each verdant season.

POET

When she did love me—for she loved me once—
There was no secret in her heart then, no pretence.
She loved me and she left me for a dunce,
A dotard, an old man! Oh, woman's joyous, fierce
inconsequence!

FAUN

His lair is on a hill-side, where the grapes first ripen:
He bribes the squirrels to bring him nuts and fill his
granary

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET

But she is venal, marketable—that is her offence.
She lives by smiles and wiles, false kisses and pretence!
Her flesh is in the scales, to be bought, to be sold;
She pawns her body for a piece of gold!
Oh God! When she drew out her amber comb, and
her dark hair unrolled.

FAUN

He knows the roots one must but chew, then spit out
and not swallow
Oh, happy Satyr!

POET

(Rises, throwing the book on the ground, and raves about)

Poems, perfidious poems! Lyrics, sapphics and the
rest!
No, I'll not read you—I'm deaf to you. Your lilting
in my breast
Rouses the old enchantment, the first, the primal
spell
Eve brought on earth to Adam from the hot depths
of hell.
I mean the spell of passion, the spark of Love's desire
Of incendiary jealousy, a flame from hell's own fire!

FAUN

The toadstool, the puffball and all the fungi
The spicy forest meat.
I would I knew
By Pan's tail, I do—
What a faun may safely eat.

PAN IN AMBUSH

Sweet, choking sweet, to the nose and the eye
Is the rank pink fungus the oak tree by.

Oh tears of greed!

With what panting speed

I'd burrow with head

With hoofs and with horns

If I knew what was ed-

ible under the thorns!

Bits toothsome in secret I'd quickly devour

But the poisonous, putrid, the rancid and sour,

Oh joy! I'd give them to other fauns!

POET

(More quietly)

But in this cloistered garden, where woman comes
no more,

I have locked my gate against her, doubly barred
my door

Here I, like holy hermit, like Nature's eremite,

Peruse the rose in daytime and read the stars at
night.

Earth! Universal mother! Help, comfort and con-
sole

A haunted, love-sick creature, a poor hag-ridden
soul!

Let me forget, Oh Nature! Let memory abate!

FAUN

How fussy is the male man, before he gets his mate!

Cranes dance when they are wooing, and mating
birds are gay:

But man's a tedious biped, when new love's on the
way!

(Laughs)

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET

(Stops to listen)

How sudden, sweet and silver the distant waterfall!
Rings shrill, like sylvan laughter or some uncanny
call!

This glen's reputed haunted, it is a fairy glade
Where Pan doth mend his reed pipes, under the
hawthorne shade.

Our gross eyes may not see him, but sometimes I
have felt

The great god breathing near me, and all my soul
has knelt!

He pipes an eerie cadence—three notes played far
apart,

The symphony, the chorus of the sad human heart!
Sunshine, you do oppress me! Lilacs, you reek too
sweet!

The leaves quicken their tremor: my heart doubles
its beat.

But why? Spring brings me nothing, my life is
at an end!

Print is best, grave books are best:

(Picks up one of the books)

my staid, my silent friend!

(He sits and tries again to read)

FAUN

Have you met the great god, Eros on the wing?
Has he ever poised beside you in the sing-

Song and swish of all Creation.

In the frenzied wild elation,

The orchestral jubilation

Of the Spring!

PAN IN AMBUSH

Once I met the great god, Eros, on the wing,
And he said to me: "Young faun, I've just the thing
There's no Hamadryad fleeter,
Oh, I wish that you could meet her
For you know there's nothing sweeter
In the Spring!"

It was time I had a flutter and a fling,
So I said: "Great Eros, bring her on the wing!"
Oh, the god was no deceiver,
Oh, the passion—Oh, the fever!
Why, I could but barely leave her
By next Spring!

POET

Here is a book that suits me; here is the ban
Mahomet put on woman. This mussulman
Declares a woman has no soul; her lovely eyes
Once closed in death, open no more in Paradise!
Exiled with impure beasts, blind earth above, about
her,
She rots—but what to me were Paradise without
her?

FAUN

I've made love when the fierce sun has shone,
Or when the full moon on her throne
Beamed with all stars together,
Or when, like a feather
She has fluttered in ether—alone!
And the strangest of joys I have known
But there's one thing, just one
That I never have done,
Be the night black as Pluto's own zone,
There's but one—just one thing—
Ne'er ate sweet nuts in Spring

PAN IN AMBUSH

Fresh nuts when the May was full-blown!

(He blows through his pipes but can as yet get no music from them; only a strange bubbling sound such as an orchestra makes when tuning.)

POET

At times runs a tremor through nature
A sigh, like a breath through the grasses.

You'd think now a woman was coming,
Whispering and rustling she passes!

In wake of this stir and this tremor
Scents quicken. From bush brake and cover
Breath perfumes; ferns palpitate, tremble,
As trembles the heart of a lover.

Moment, tense, sweet, expectant! First love
Is not sharper! Oh Nature, you hurt!

Her I feel in your beauty, I hear
In your sighing the swish of her skirt!
(The faun plays a few faltering notes.)

POET

(Puts his hands over his ears and gabbles off as though in prayer.)

Philosophy! My chaste, new mistress, let me con
Thy lover Socrates—or no—this lexicon—
Or no! Some poet rather, whose verse soars on
wings,

(Picks up a book but does not open it yet.)
Life without love is like a lyre without strings!

(The Faun plays a few more faltering notes, always getting a little further in the cadence.)

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET

(Puts his hands over his ears, trying to read.)

There's rhythm for you! There's a lyrical outburst!

(Relapsing and dreaming off again.)

Yes, yes, it was, I think, in April we met first.

FAUN

(Plays again, getting still further in the cadence)

There's no throb in that trill, it had a pulseless sound.

POET

Oh, those dark eyes of hers, where all my soul lies
drowned!

Dear God! How will it seem to be always alone?

(The poet's head sinks between his hands and he weeps silently.)

FAUN

(At this moment bursts out into a triumphant Paean, a volley of notes.)

By Pan! A sweeter lilt; it had a fuller tone!

(The voices of two girls sound from over the wall.)

SECOND PUPIL

Is it here the garden door is?

THIRD PUPIL

Yes, it's there!

SECOND PUPIL

Here by all these morning glories?

THIRD PUPIL

Yes, it's where

The woodbine and clematis

Are twined about a lattice

And bob like dancing lasses at a fair.

PAN IN AMBUSH

SECOND PUPIL

In the garden door a grate is?

THIRD PUPIL

Yes, it's there!

SECOND PUPIL

Can one see where the far gate is?

THIRD PUPIL

Everywhere!

SECOND PUPIL

Look! Tulips stiff as fencers
When saluting, and censers
Are the May-boughs perfuming all the air!

POET

Oh voice, that first in Eden woke the snake,
Put hope in the old serpent's heart to break
The spell of symmetry that held the earth
Immortal, young and glad! Voice that gave birth
To all calamity! Trebles that haunt!
Babble of women! Hence! Begone! Avaunt!
(*Faun plays.*)

POET

(*Pauses and hesitates.*)

But why, like some rude clown, ungallant fool,
Ban every crinoline? 'Tis but a school!
In science name, all I admit, any
May in my garden study botany.
And these are children; I can see between
The lilacs bob each joyous crinoline.
Love still is masked, wrapped in his cloak to them.
Supposing that I stayed and spoke to them!

PAN IN AMBUSH

But no! Weakness! They have a chaperone.
Scarce could I say a word to them alone,
Scarce could I have a word with them in peace,
Accursed sex! Eggs of the cockatrice!

(Rushes into house.)

(The botany teacher enters with the second and third pupils. The schoolmistress follows with the first pupil.)

SECOND PUPIL

We've studied mythology, scandals and all!

THIRD PUPIL

We've rather enjoyed it

SECOND PUPIL

There is little to pall

In the bible when read

Unexpurged from the Fall.

BOTANY TEACHER

Indeed, two most promising girls!

THIRD PUPIL

We've studied the kings down

From good old King John.

SECOND PUPIL

We've read how they behaved.

THIRD PUPIL

Also what they had on.

SECOND PUPIL

And what wife they suppressed,

When they had a fad on.

PAN IN AMBUSH

BOTANY TEACHER

Two really remarkable girls!

THIRD PUPIL

We've learnt how to curtsey
And dance at a rout.

SECOND PUPIL

And drop a bouquet
When a young man's about!

THIRD PUPIL

And when we've done wrong,
We have not been found out.

BOTANY TEACHER

Two highly superior girls!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(Fluttering forward.)

Ah! The pretty ringtime!

Oh! The balmy springtime!

As the swan of Avon—as Mr. Shakespeare said

Young ladies, turn your toes out,

Give your crinolines a flout,

Gertrude, hold your parasol erect above your head!

Young ladies, the Spring is at its full consummation.

See Earth's horticultural—her sweet dissipation!

Prosperpina has passed! A marvelous spectacle!

BOTANY TEACHER

(Aside)

I'll pluck each a posy. No, 't isn't respectable.

PAN IN AMBUSH

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Indeed, young ladies, believe me, I deeply admire
In Nature's great scheme how birds, brooks, how
insects conspire
'Gainst sloth. Mark how the bee improves each
shining hour!

BOTANY TEACHER

See! He buzzes around each promiscuous flower.

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Nota bene, young ladies, there is nothing that grows
But is perfect—a gem. Now, let us look at that rose.
Should we not raise our souls in fond praise to the
Giver?

BOTANY TEACHER

(Studying the rose with his magnifying glass)
Yes, as I thought, she's a rambler, she's a free
liver!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Young ladies, this term
Do you feel that you're firm
In what it has been your vocation
To mark, learn and digest?
I'll put you now to the test
With a serious examination.

*(She claps her hands. The girls stand in a row
facing her. The first pupil nearest the footlights,
then the second, then the third)*

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(Briskly)

Colloquial name for the Stella Gloria?
Answer me that, if you can, Victoria?

PAN IN AMBUSH

FIRST PUPIL

'Tis just on the tip of my tongue, alas!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Go at once to the bottom of the class!

(The first pupil trips down to the bottom of the class. Then the whole class trips up a few steps so as to stand where it did before, just facing the schoolmistress. Every time a pupil is sent to the bottom of the class this same little dance is performed identically, while the faun plays a trill. The girls stand like rigid dolls, their toes turned out, their parasols above their heads. The pupil at the head of the class wears a smug expression. The other two appear abashed)

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Who fiddled while Rome burnt?

THIRD PUPIL

A dance and song

Were performed by —— by ——

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(Pointing)

Go where you belong!

(The second pupil trips to the bottom of the class. Same business)

THIRD PUPIL

(Waving her hand animatedly, eager to speak)

By a lady in her camisole—but ——

SCHOOLMISTRESS

By Nero, whose likeness you've seen. Tut, tut.

PAN IN AMBUSH

(Points, and the third pupil goes to the bottom of the class)

Victoria head of the class again!

Do you realize the position you maintain?

BOTANY TEACHER

Her responsibility weighs upon her,

She knows 'tis a precarious honor.

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Now, let us plunge deeper into the past.

For how many days did the deluge last?

FIRST PUPIL

Don't know, teacher, 'twas a prodigious rain.

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Go to the bottom of the class again!

(The first pupil does so)

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(Claps her hands. The girls straighten up)

Ladies, attention! Arithmetic!

Now, if seven hens in thirteen years

Laid ninety-two eggs, for it appears

That the hen is, indeed, prolific!

If on the Leap Year they laid six more

How long would it take each hen before

She laid an omelette? Be specific!

(The girls are silent. They fidget)

What, silent? Mute? Drooping heads, cheeks that burn?

Go to the bottom of the class in turn!

(They do so)

PAN IN AMBUSH

BOTANY TEACHER

Ma'am, dismiss the class! Sit ladies, do. This microscope can
Dissect agricultural secrets, once sacred to Pan.
(All sit and study specimens)

FIRST PUPIL

Who, teacher, was that great god, Pan, of whom the ancients wrote?

BOTANY TEACHER

My child, he was a horrid and most unseemly goat!

FAUN

(Springing up, incensed)

Oh, blasphemy! A shudder runs through Nature!
Sacrilege! I crouch—I pounce!
But no—in Pan's offended name, this anathema
awful I pronounce.

(Like the imp in the pantomime, with uplifted hands he curses the botany teacher, who is of course, as is everyone else on the stage, oblivious of him. During the curse the botany teacher studies specimens through his microscope, but gradually he becomes depressed. He rolls his eyes in a sentimental fashion. He lays down his microscope and sighs as the faun finishes)

Botanist foolish!

Mortal unwary!

Thou shalt eke out thy days

In a girls' seminary!

Watch primary classes

To womanhood grow.

And torments of Tantalus

PAN IN AMBUSH

Then thou shalt know.

To observe these enchanting—

These feminine charms,

Ripening for other and
Masculine arms!

Though of love horticultural
thou tell the sweet story,

Yet they'll call thee "old bore"
In the girls' dormitory!

Thou shalt dote on the prize
Model pupil, alas!

And prepare floral idylls
For thy botany class!

But when thou wouldst speak
See! The fair head is hid!

She swallows a caramel
Behind her desk lid!

Though thou strive with rare
Specimens to enrapture and please

Yet, the girls shall prefer
On the flighty trapeze

With the muscular gymnast
to wantonly play,

Or go out with male cousins
On the half-holiday:

Till, maddened, distraught,
Thou shalt bend to the mighty

Inexorable yoke
Of the dread Aphrodite!

And the plain maiden lady
Who is now at thy side,

Thou shalt clasp to thy breast
As thy middle-aged bride!

(Sits down in a huff with his back turned)

PAN IN AMBUSH

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(Snuggling coyly up to the botany teacher)

Is this the double-petalled Vobilisculam?
Or is it a geranium? . . .

BOTANY TEACHER

(With an awful look at her)

'Tis neither, ma'am!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Sir! Your looks are wild, your voice has a hollow ring.

BOTANY TEACHER

Ma'am, Oh ma'am, I dread the influence of the Spring!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Ah, longing for green fields, dear sir, and pastures new?

In the forest let us botanise, I and you!

Gertrude and Caroline! Go, ladies, for a walk!

Intersperse your chatter with cultivated talk.

Round the common go, five times in brisk rotation,

Greet each object with a suitable quotation!

(Points)

There, a rare specimen of the spreading chestnut stands;

Recall the village smith—his large and sinewy hands!

THE SECOND AND THIRD PUPILS

(Exit holding each other by the hand and chanting as they go)

"Beneath the spreading chestnut . . ."

(The botany teacher starts to follow them)

PAN IN AMBUSH

SCHOOLMISTRESS

(To botany teacher)

Why are you flitting?

BOTANY TEACHER

Merely to suggest quotations that are fitting.

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Come forestward with me, I'll take no denial!

(Turning to first pupil)

Ah, Victoria, musing on the sundial?

(Goes up to first pupil and reads the motto on the sundial)

The motto reads: "Amor solus tempus vincit."
Translate; amplify!

(The first pupil is silent and hangs her head; scrapes with her foot, etc.)

What, mute! Fie, ignorant chit!

Stay! Peruse this motto! I shall be truly vexed,
If by dinner time you've not deciphered the text!

(Is about to exit but notices that the botany teacher is not coming)

But why, sir, do you loiter, do you stay behind?

BOTANY TEACHER

To elucidate Latin to the growing mind!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

No, no, dear sir! Your arm, and come along with
me!

(She takes his arm)

This dear child will join us under the greenwood
tree.

But why this rolling eye? Don't you feel quite the
thing?

PAN IN AMBUSH

BOTANY TEACHER

(In a sepulchral voice)

Ma'am, ah ma'am, I dread the influence of the Spring!

SCHOOLMISTRESS

Ah, my mittens, shawl, butterfly net! Pray, sir, bring

My reticule!

BOTANY TEACHER

I dread the influence of Spring!

(The schoolmistress hands the botany teacher all her paraphernalia and they exit L, he laden down, reluctantly looking back at the first pupil)

(The faun plays)

FIRST PUPIL

Black cypresses towering,

White lilacs a-flowering,

And scents overpowering

Whose sweet names I ignore!

Strange garden where fragrance teems,

Garden, where it somehow seems

That in my own secret dreams

I have strayed here before.

(The faun plays a short cadence)

Beauty acute! Oh, sweet tears,

When the heart beats and the ears

Ring! Hush! Hark! Listen! One hears

The pipes of Arcady!

Poppies flame and fulgurate,

And glow like the rose agate.

Oh, I've grown so sad of late,

Now I'm a young lady.

PAN IN AMBUSH

(The faun plays a short cadence)

Yes, beauty oppresses me,
And earth's charm distresses me.

When the breeze caresses me

From the South, blowing up
Perfumes of unknown flowers,
Incense from southern hours!

Oh! What satanic powers

A girl meets growing up!

(The faun plays a short cadence)

FIRST PUPIL

It's no use to dissemble

I blush, I pale, I tremble

As though I'd met the emble-

matical fiend who, switched

By God from the Firmament,

Lurks in music, color, scent!

I pray by the Sacrament

That I be not bewitched.

*(Sits down on the bank R of the stage near the
faun and picks a flower)*

FAUN

*(His pipe is finished. He is winding round it a
bit of ivy)*

There was once a great king's daughter, who grew
pale,

And who trembled like a lily in a gale;

Nor all the Court physicians,

Nor cleverest magicians,

Nor the priests' fervent petitions
Could avail!

PAN IN AMBUSH

She grows pale, the great king's daughter—yet more
pale,
And she droops as does a long-becalmed sail.
The old sages do not know
That the fiend who plagues her so
Is Love, who beats her with his bow
For a flail!

FIRST PUPIL

*(As she speaks the following she pulls the petals
from the flower and recites like a child, swinging one
foot and emphasizing the jingle of the verse)*

What will summer,
Midsummer bring?
One lover? Two lovers?
Or in early Spring
Will a young man court me
With a wedding ring?
Or, when snow first
The cold earth covers
Shall I have one, two—
Three—four lovers?
Or, when leaves sere
From the forest fall,
Shall I meet the dearest,
The only love of all?
Dark? Fair?
Short? Tall?
One lover—two lovers?

(Disappointed)

No love at all!

(Trying to comfort herself)

I counted the petals, yet the verse works out wrong.
'Tis but a superstition, a stupid, old-time song!

PAN IN AMBUSH

A silly lullaby my nurse has often sung
In the past to me, years ago, when I was young.
'Tis but foolishness and a childish nursery rhyme!

(Inconsequently)

I will try it again, for it did not count last time.

(She begins again to pull off the petals from another flower, whispering to herself the while)

FAUN

(Comes behind the young girl and whispers to her over her shoulder)

Young girl, oh young girl!

There's a waltz in the whirl

Of the pool by the mill.

Can't the mill-wheel keep still?

Like the mad heart of Love

It beats, throbs, while above

From the bank, willows seem

Kissing shades in the stream!

Youth's but a short sleep, yes, and Love is its dream!

Its ecstatic, redoubtable, pulse-shaking dream!

FIRST PUPIL

In study time I like to read, when teacher's off her
guard,

Dream and look out of window at the recreation
yard.

My geography I open, with the map I cover

The story of a young girl and a young man—her
lover;

More absorbing by far than the coastal line of
Dover!

For study books I feign to look, pens, blotting paper,
lest

PAN IN AMBUSH

Teacher should guess I am remiss, and with my forehead pressed
Against my desk-lid, opened wide, I read until distressed
By a vague, delicious turmoil, a sort of sweet unrest—
And then my heart starts softly, softly knocking in my breast!

FAUN

Young girl, oh young girl!
When you hear the soft swirl
And the swish of the breeze
Through the shimmering trees,
It brings you a message
This shuddering presage,
For it tells you just this—
What you want—what you miss;
Faint sweet premonition of Love's long, first kiss!
Love's tremulous, insatiable, sense-racking kiss!

FIRST PUPIL

Teacher says prayers at 9 p. m. and then upstairs
we go,
The dormitory looks so staid with white beds in a
row,
Kind teacher blows each candle out, she draws the
curtain rings,
And lying quiet in the dark, I think of such odd
things.
Of a choir boy I've seen in church, who like an angel
sings.
And somehow I can't sleep at all, I can't get any rest.
I creep up to the window, in my nightgown, all undressed.

PAN IN AMBUSH

I like to see the rising moon, or watch her silver
crest

Vanish on the horizon when she's setting in the West.
And then my heart starts softly, softly knocking in
my breast!

FAUN

Young girl, oh young girl!
The shy petals unfurl
Of the secret foxglove
In the fervour of love!
'Neath the hot prying sun
Its leaves part one by one.
Till its closed heart shall lay
Bare to kisses of day.

What can live without love, lass? Coming your
way—

Sighing low, breathing quick—love is coming your
way.

FIRST PUPIL

When I'm grown up . . .

(She hesitates and goes to the dial)

(The faun squats down where she was sitting)

. . . I must read this dial.

'Amor' I know is 'love.' This Latin, what a trial!

FAUN

Women are pretty in their way,
They have a charm I don't gainsay.
But I ask you, what's their use?
Why, a fat, stuffed, Strasbourg goose
Can run as far as they can in a day!

Now, in the woods, a pixie, fay—
Or, in the floods, a nixie may

PAN IN AMBUSH

Teach the whirligig of Pan,
But poor, unexacting man
Has never joined the fairy jig. Evoe!

FIRST PUPIL

Next year I shall waltz, if asked out at all.
Oh my heart! Oh how 'twill beat at my very first
ball!

FAUN

Oh they talk, these pretty women—how they talk!
I have watched them on a solitary walk
As to themselves they gabble.
And feverishly babble.
As they tear a daisy's petals from its stalk.

You may think I speak in undiscerning haste,
But I vow that a mermaid's more to my taste
Though she's somewhat cold and numb
At least, half the time she's dumb,
For the poor girl's half a fish up to the waist.

FIRST PUPIL

'Amor'—They say a poet lives here and
Somehow I think he must be young, pale, heart-
broken, grand!

FAUN

I admit there's much variety in women,
For I once saw a girls' Board School go a-swimmin.'
I was hiding in the laurels, and the pretty little
sillies
Came trippin' down like fillies.
There were chestnuts, bays and sorrels
And they baulked the waves like fences,
But they've fads and false pretences,
And there's some that have got morals!

PAN IN AMBUSH

FIRST PUPIL

'Amor'—yes, 'love.' His elbow must press on
(*Taking up a position*)
The dial thus! Oh, I wish I had my blue dress on!

FAUN

Give me a genial mad Bacchante
Who's a very Coryphante
On her feet, when there's Chianti
A-running down her throat.
Whose a-side-stepping, whose side glancing
Sets all the satyrs prancing
Rouses capers in each ante-
diluvian he-goat!
(*He skips back to his lair*)

POET

(*Enters. He has rearranged his stock, put on a new waistcoat, pomaded his hair and carries a dressy grey beaver. He speaks from the steps of the house*)

So those school chits are gone! How still my staid
monastic garden seems!

Void, joyless as the dawn to unloved lovers waken-
ing from their dreams.

And what then? Am I sad? But why?

(*Coming down*)

Ah, like swallows on migration
Some girls have passed. Indomitable heart! Fool-
ish agitation!

But look! There is yet one who stays

She leans on the old dial and delays.

O'er the vague moss-grown text is bent

Her sweet young head in studious wonderment!

(*Delighted*)

PAN IN AMBUSH

Philosophy! Philosophy! Humbly I crave thy pardon!

But indisputably there is a woman in my garden!
A woman! What does she look like? How does she speak?

Charm of the unknown face, the half-averted cheek!
Touching appeal of girlhood! Palpitant lashes!
Veiling the eyes of youth! Deep gaze that abashes!
The misanthrope!

(Beating his breast)

Poet! Poet! Fool, child thou art!
What then? Because one woman's versed in sensual art

False—vile—is there no unkissed mouth, no intact heart?

FIRST PUPIL

(Looking up, startled)

Oh sir!

POET

Oh ma'am! Nay, nay, I prithee, do not start!
For charity's sweet sake, dear ma'am, resume that pose

And let me look upon you—gaze upon you close,
While burns this way-worn heart self-consuming incense,

Smouldering before the shrine of breathing innocence.

Ma'am, I'm a faltering rhymester, nothing more.
But with immortal longings I adore
What is immaculate and what is pure.

In you I see as 'twere the immature
Promise that breathes when the first swallow's wing
Grazes the eaves in very early Spring

The perfect blossom of Spring's coronal!

PAN IN AMBUSH

FIRST PUPIL

Oh sir, I pray you hush!

POET

Nay, ma'am, you need not blush!

A poet's rhapsodies are quite impersonal.

(Makes a deep ceremonious bow)

FIRST PUPIL

(Curtsies)

Kind sir, I fear you'll think me a brazen jig, bold-faced

To find me thus unchaperoned. Indeed, sir, I'm strait-laced.

I have the genteel manners of a young girl in her teens,

But teacher bade me stay here, for she asked what this means,

This motto. I don't know and I don't know what to do,

So might I make so bold then, kind sir, as to ask you?

POET

(Translating motto)

"Only Love triumphs over time!" Trite, but oh, how true

Time will have done his worst with me, I'll be old

When Love no more can terrorize and harm me.

In the grave only will beauty leave me cold.

I shall be dead when women cease to charm me.

FIRST PUPIL

Oh sir, you do—you really do alarm me!

PAN IN AMBUSH

FAUN

These females know a lover is perverse as their own shadows.

Run towards him and he flies—but shrink from him and he follows.

Now when a dryad would be kissed, observe she starts a-running,

Then some faun is sure to chase her; dryads are very cunning.

POET

(To himself)

Practical I need must be, there is much at stake.

(To first pupil)

'Tis your custom, I think, with your schoolmates to take

A brisk constitutional at noon round the lake.

Now, if o'er the common I cross as you do,

And spell-bound stand staring at Heaven's deep blue.

And take off my hat——

(Lifts his hat high)

as though awed by the view,

Will your teacher suspect I am bowing to you?

FIRST PUPIL

Sir, my teacher is kind, but she's firm and she's set
In her notions. Yes, teacher will fume and she'll
fret

At the least breach of manners of strict etiquette.

But I'm her prize pupil, she is not too—too—

Observant of me, so if then at the view

You take off your hat, while I tie up my shoe

Would then teacher suspect I am curtseying to you?

(Sinks down as though tying her shoe, and so drops a deep curtsey)

PAN IN AMBUSH

FAUN

Ah, we're all the same, be we white limbs or old
bellwethers.

Now, they call that making love—I call it fuss and
feathers.

POET

Dear ma'am, forgive me pray, if unconventional I
seem,

But I'm a child of nature and each poet has his
dream.

In this chimeric interview, if my arm enlaced you,
And bending down, I gently then, but firmly em-
braced you,

Now pray don't think me personal, but tell me what
you'd do?

FIRST PUPIL

(Curtseying)

Kind sir, I'll strive to answer, all untutored as I am.

POET

(Bowling)

A favourable answer will obleege, dear ma'am.

FIRST PUPIL

Kind sir, I fear you'll think me sadly backward for
my age,

Though I've read many poets from their first to their
last page.

I surmise what I've not felt might rouse my indig-
nation.

I might be very angry or blush like a carnation.

You see I've not been kissed, and I've no imagination.

PAN IN AMBUSH

POET

(Bowling)

Oh ma'am, you do malign yourself, I vow, I swear
you do!

FIRST PUPIL

(Curtseying)

You flatter me, kind sir, the facts I state are true.

FAUN

*(Growing sulky and impatient. He thinks this
love making too formal)*

Now look at them bowling—now look at them scrap-
ing?

Now what are they playing at, what are they ape-
ing?

POET

(More and more interested and animated)

Dear ma'am, another problem—this quite hypo-
thetical.

Now supposing that I wrote you a note hysterical.
Offering hand, heart, genius and a brewery that I
Have lately bought in Dublin, would you leave me
long to sigh?

FIRST PUPIL

Sir, a written letter deserves a written prompt
reply.

POET

(Bowling)

Dear ma'am, I must apologize, with lovers you're
besieged.

FIRST PUPIL

(Curtseying)

Oh no, dear sir, oh not at all, deeply obleeged.

PAN IN AMBUSH

FAUN

These mortal lovers talk so much, why I can't make out!

Why don't they get on with it, and what's it all about?

They love, why not be natural—jubilant with mirth?
Why complicate the only sweet perfect thing on earth?

POET

(Very sentimental)

Your eyes are of what color? Blue? Violet? Nay, sacred grey?

In compassion's name lift those long lashes—do not look away!

So Laura seemed to Petrarch and so seemed Beatrice to Dante.

FAUN

I could do with a bunch of grapes and a sunburnt Bacchante,

Or perhaps a green mermaid effulgent from out of the sea

Would be more to my taste—but really it is all one to me.

Dark groves I know, where pale elves moon-mad may be trapped resorting;

I'll sharpen my horns—make a wreath—tune my pipe and go courting.

(The faun now makes his wreath and while he's doing so intones the following lyric, while the poet plucks the first pupil a nosegay which he gives her with a deep bow when the faun has finished his verses)

PAN IN AMBUSH

FAUN

Goodman Bacchus, he came
And he said "It's a shame
That a young faun should sober be.
A big goat skin of wine
Is yours fresh from the vine
If my worshipper you will be!"
It was: Hic Bacchus!
It was: Hoc Bacchus!
Hiccupping came to me,
But why should I trouble,
To see the world double?
And his worshipper I'll not be!

Dame Venus at random
Came driving a tandem
Of doves, and she called to me
"I from Paphos apace
Come, for 'tis a disgrace
That a young faun should mateless be.
I've a snug little lair
And I've just your affair
If my worshipper you will be."
Perfidious Venus!
Insidious Venus!
Venus, the Cyprian, came to me.
Oh I fear your ire
I'm flax to your fire,
Venus, your worshipper I'll be!

POET

Could woman but be faithful ——

PAN IN AMBUSH

FAUN

Faithful! I've only heard
Poor mortal lovers say that. Faithful! Don't know
the word.

POET

(More and more ardent)

And methinks she might be faithful, when I gaze
on you,
Sweet, white-muslined innocence, encircled with
pure blue.
I stand before you humbled, abashed, adoring,
charmed!

(Surprised, his hand on his heart)

What, blighted, disillusioned heart! Are you not
dead—embalmed?

*(Keeps his hand on his heart and consults himself
in a rhapsody)*

FAUN

Heart! Peculiar human word! But I know what it
means

A symbol I've seen carved on the oaks of village
greens.

Round like the ring of Eternity, but somewhat bent,
Hearts are pointed at bottom, with at the top a dent.

POET

(Quite transported)

Blessed romance! Divine Eros! Oh love, flail and
torch of life!

'Tis the old familiar turmoil—Dear ma'am, will you
be my wife?

FIRST PUPIL

This is so—so very sudden! Oh surely 'twould be
fitter

PAN IN AMBUSH

To ask my kind teacher's advice. Oh I'm all of a twitter!

(They hold hands over the dial, whisper to each other; then they are silent)

FAUN

(Growing sentimental)

I came into this garden when the moon was at its zenith,

It was last night—yea, yesternight—that I over-leapt this wall.

And my thoughts were full of longing and of Love's extreme desire.

There was not a breeze a-breathing 'neath the star-bespangled pall.

And I saw the flowers standing, pallid, wan with tense desire.

There a far rose loved a rosebud just opening for a kiss!

I forgot my thoughts of courting and blew the golden pollen

Through the still, becalmed garden in the breathless night, like this!

(He waves his arms and whistles, imitating the wind)

FIRST PUPIL

There's no wind a-stirring, yet all the leaves tremble,
Oh, but the world's a wonderful place!

POET

Dear heart! In our silence do you feel our thoughts meet,

PAN IN AMBUSH

Suffuse together and embrace?

(Kisses her)

FIRST PUPIL

I have loved you always before I knew you
With each deep indrawn breath, my lover!

POET

Oh, the time we've lost, would we'd met sooner!
May-tide is waning, Spring's almost over.
*(The poet and the first pupil wander into the
bower R. The faun plays)*

FAUN

'Twill be a sweet propitious summer. Our benign
Mother, dear Earth, stretches at ease
Ah, the kind moon-drenched nights! Ah, the young
hearts to be engraved yet on the old oak trees!
(He plays as the curtain falls)







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 407 440 0